

["Bill" Knox]

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"Bill" Knox:

"Well kiddo it sure is hot, hain't it? This is the kind of a day they couldn't git the knifemakers to work, no sir. Least bit hot, they'd knock off and go up to the saloon for their beer. How you makin' out, you gittin' lots of information? Hain't many left, is they, when you go lookin' for em? Well, I's glad I hain't workin' today kiddo. But I suppose it'll be just as hot when I go in tomorrow. Work down in that damn gravel bank, I s'pose, the sun's enough to kill you.

"You know kiddo, what makes me mad is they took a bunch of fellas off the town gang last week and gave them jobs for Innes the contractor. He's doin' some sidewalk work for the town, so they're makin' him use town help. Well, they're payin' them fellas fifty cents an hour. And they wouldn't take me on. I couldn't git 'em to take me, guess they think I's too old, or somethin'. Hell, I could outwork most of them, old's I am.

"So me and the other fellas on the town gang is workin' for a two dollar and a half slip — two days a week —doin' just as hard work. That hain't right, is it kiddo? The way I look at it, if they's jobs to give out like that, and they hain't enough to go round, they could draw names out of a hat or somethin'. Then everybody'd be satisfied. This way here hain't fair. Here we air, workin' just as hard as Innes' man and all we're gittin' is a two dollar and a half slip. Why, hell, kiddo, you can't even eat good enough on two dollars and a half to do hard work. They give you stuff down to the town hall like grape fruit and oranges and that, but that stuff don't stick to your ribs.

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“sd here a coupla days ago a fella came around to the town hall looking for woodchoppers. Well, I been choppin' wood all winter, so right away they thought of me, 'Git Bill Knox,' they says, she's a good woodchopper. But I says nothin' doin' I says I know that fella. When you work for him you work piecework and you work like hell and don't git nothin'. And it's twicet as hard cuttin' wood now in the summer time, trimmin' and all. So I says nothin' doin'. They they got mad, and says well, I turned down a job and so the town don't have to keep me. Hain't that a fine one? They figgered I wasn't a good enough man to go out and work for Innes, but I's strong enough to chop wood all summer. It's too much fer me to figger out, kiddo, maybe you kin do it. They never dropped me, anyway, I's goin' to work tomorrow, same's I been doin'.

“Well, the old selectman's sick and down to the hospital now, and I don't wish him any hard luck or anything, but it won't hurt him to suffer a little. I been doin' some sufferin' myself this winter. Had a pain in my side fer a long time. And that's another thing. If I wanted to be mean about it I could go to Doc Wight and I could git a slip sayin' I hain't able to do hard work. He'd give it to me, I know he would, because he knows I's a sick man. And then the town'd not only have to keep me fer nothin', but pay my doctor's bills too.

“That hain't the way I like to do things, though No sir, I'll keep on workin'. Figger it takes my mind off my troubles. More you loaf around, more you git to worryin' about yourself. First thing you know you're ready fer the bughouse.

“It's gittin' to be a funny world, hain't it kiddo? I been thinkin' about it quite a lot since you asked me about the knifemakin' business 3 here last week or whenever it was. If anybody'd told me forty years ago that knifemakin' would be dead and buried by now I woulda said they was crazy. All I could see when I went to work in the knife shop was the good money. I'd been better off if I learned some other trade. Only I probably woulda got thrown out anyway, no matter what it was. When you git past fifty these days in the factories you're done.

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"Everybody tryin' to undersell everybody else. That makes the work cheap and when the work's cheap a man's got to work twicet as fast to make a day's pay, and it takes a young man to work fast, kiddo.

"Fella was around here the other day with a cheap loafer bread. It's two cents cheaper than any other bread. If other bread is sellin' for twelve cents they git ten, and if other bread is sellin' for ten, they git eight. And so on, I s'pose if everybody else sold bread for two cents this fella'd give his away. And the help will have to pay the bakery for the privilege of workin'.

"When I was a young fella, all the women made their own bread. And kiddo, it was good, too, it wasn't like this here stuff the big bakers are puttin' out. It was tasty and nourishin'. I rather eat whole wheat bread myself than the white bread. All the good stuff is baked outa that white bread. The whole wheat is more healthy. You ask any doctor.

"And that reminds me, I got to be gittin' up town, and do a little tradin'. It won't take long, 'cause I hain't got but damn little credit. I hain't been off this porch all afternoon, it's so damn hot."